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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [SY](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: UAE PRESS CONDEMNS ARREST OF SYRIAN JOURNALIST  
MICHEL KILO (FOLLOWING HIS RECENT VISIT TO THE UAE)

Classified By: DCM Martin Quinn, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Arabic and English language dailies prominently covered the arrest of Syrian activist Michel Kilo (who was in the UAE May 9-10 participating in a conference hosted by Sharjah-based "Al Khaleej") and widely condemned his detention. Reaction to the press coverage by the official Emirates News Agency (WAM) may indicate that the UAEG has hardened its position with regard to Syria. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Both Arabic and English language dailies prominently covered the arrest of Syrian activist Michel Kilo by Syrian state security, and published editorials condemning his detention. The Arabic daily "Al Khaleej" carried an unsigned editorial urging the Syrian president to release Kilo and other "hostages of conscience" in Syria specifically naming Al Khaleej's Damascus correspondent Muhammad Abdullah. The editorial begins: "Syrian authorities added Michel Kilo to a long list of detainees . . . to punish for exercising their free opinion" and adding "it is imperative to break all chains and liberate all detainees and launch the new spring in Syria that President Bashar promised his people."

¶3. (U) Under the header "An arrest made for no reason" an editorial in the English daily "Gulf News" characterized Kilo's arrest as "an inexplicable move by the Damascus regime and a grave mistake that should be rectified immediately." Several articles speculated that Kilo was arrested for signing the "Damascus-Beirut declaration" which calls for Syria and Lebanon to mend their "frayed relations." An editorial in the English daily "Khaleej Times" stated that "it is clear that Syria cannot tell its friends from its foes" and that the Damascus-Beirut declaration "is a well meaning and genuine attempt to bridge the growing gulf between the two countries." It concludes with a call for Syria and Lebanon to "free themselves from the heavy burden of their recent history" and face their challenges together.

¶4. (C) Kilo was in the UAE last week speaking at an annual conference hosted by Al Khaleej on May 9-10. The Embassy's Syrian-born Information Specialist spoke to Kilo during the conference about the situation in Syria and the controversial document Kilo signed along with other Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals laying out a framework for Syrian-Lebanese relations. Kilo commented to FSN that Syrian security "is furious about the document" simply because it places Lebanon on the same footing with Syria and views Lebanon as an independent and sovereign state. Kilo also voiced the fear that he would be arrested upon his return to Syria.

¶5. (C) On May 17, UAEG's official news agency, The Emirates News Agency (WAM), issued a story largely quoting the Khaleej

Times editorial verbatim. Although no further comment about the detention was offered in the WAM article, the reprinting of the editorial, virtually in its entirety, can be viewed as official endorsement of the statements made, and may indicate that the UAEG has hardened its position with regard to Syria.

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